GOfer beats out competitors

If you have hundreds of files on your personal computer, you know the frustration of "misplacing" a file — forgetting where you put it or forgetting what you named it.

This happens to me quite frequently, so I've made it a point to keep my eyes open for tools that can get me out of that pinch.

Here are two programs that have been designed to rescue us from this technological dilemma. One clearly excels.

The first and best is GOfer, available from Microlytics, 300 Main St., East Rochester, N.Y. 14445, (716) 377-0130.

Priced at $79.95, GOfer is a bargain when it comes to relieving the frustration of rummaging through files. In fact, it helped me out on this column. Using GOfer, I was able to easily search through my hundreds of files for a brief review I wrote of the program a year ago.

GOfer searches through the entire contents of any floppy disk or hard disk for a key word or character string, and it provides all the

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file names that contain that string—fast.

Unlike other programs that claim to perform this simple but tedious task, GOfer does not take up time by building an index of all the words in your files or take up valuable hard disk space with the indexes. Its search function is so fast that it doesn't need a prebuilt index.

GOfer has a couple of problems, however.

If the file you're looking for was mistakenly deleted, it may be somewhere on your hard disk, but GOfer is unable to go get it. To retrieve a deleted file, you have to use other programs, such as the Norton Utilities, that have an "undelete" or "restore" feature.

Also, GOfer isn't the type of pro-

gram that's intuitively easy to use. Until you get used to it, you'll find yourself regularly consulting the manual.

The second program I've looked at that has a similar objective is The Text Collector. New to the market, The Text Collector comes from O'Neill Software, 440 Davis Court, San Francisco 94111, (415) 398-2255. It sells for $69 a copy.

Although GOfer always worked just fine for me, I wanted to see if the new kid on the block had built a better mousetrap. It hadn't.

The Text Collector software is difficult to understand, and I found that the manual isn't much help. But if you do get the hang of it, it will find words, parts of words, character strings, punctuation, control codes, even whole paragraphs.

Then it will sort them for you, put them in order, give them all titles, and present them nicely.

That's all well and good, if you're a researcher, or if you have a vast number of files or scattered

blocks of text that you need to be able to peruse.

If you have a data base of drugs, for example, with a description of the side effects of each one stored on your computer, and you want to compile a list of all those that give people headaches, Text Collector can automatically gather the entire text for each drug.

GOfer, however, will only identify the word "headache" and tell you where it appears.

The bottom line: Though Text Collector is a more powerful search tool and costs about the same as GOfer, it's overpowered and overcomplicated for use in a general office setting.

I recommend you consider the more elegant — and easier-to-use — GOfer.

Hillel Segal's column includes evaluations of gadgets, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.